



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 1, 2004

CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
MARVIN SMILON, HERBERT HADAD
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600

**N.J. MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO IDENTITY THEFT AND CREDIT CARD
FRAUD INVOLVING OVER 1000 VICTIMS AND LOSS OF OVER \$500,000**

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced JOEL JUSTE, a/k/a "Joel Juste Edmond," a/k/a "Steve," pled guilty yesterday to conspiracy to commit wire fraud and conspiracy to commit access device fraud in a scheme that netted more than \$500,000 in illegal charges.

JUSTE was arrested and his Indictment unsealed on September 15, 2003. During his plea yesterday before United States District Judge NAOMI REICE BUCHWALD, JUSTE admitted that he and his co-conspirators participated in a conspiracy to activate credit cards without authorization by obtaining personal information regarding the cardholders and then using the credit cards to buy merchandise. As part of the scheme, according to the Indictment, JUSTE and his co-conspirators intercepted credit cards that were being mailed to the respective users, and used computers to access credit reporting agencies' databases to obtain credit history reports on the credit card account holders.

According to the Indictment, JUSTE and his co-conspirators then used that information on the illegally obtained credit reports to activate the stolen cards. According to the Indictment, once the cards were activated, JUSTE and his co-conspirators used the cards to make purchases, then sold those items for profit. According to the Indictment, during the course of the conspiracy, more than 1000 credit history reports were illegally obtained. In his plea agreement, JUSTE admitted that and his co-conspirators caused a loss to consumers exceeding \$500,000 in unauthorized charges.

JUSTE, 28, is a resident of West Orange, New Jersey. He faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison when he is sentenced on July 13, 2004. JUSTE also agreed to the forfeiture of his interest in 2002 Mercedes that was purchased with the fruits of JUSTE's criminal activity.

Mr. KELLEY praised the efforts of the United States Postal Inspection Service and the United States Secret Service in investigating this case.

Assistant United States Attorney ANTHONY S. BARKOW is in charge of the prosecution.

04-66

###